My Birth Matters

Communications Toolkit

THANK YOU for your interest in supporting the My Birth Matters consumer education campaign. Your communications support is essential to educating women about C-sections and encouraging them to engage with their providers in shared decisionmaking.

In this toolkit you’ll find a collection of resources for communicating about the My Birth Matters campaign with your stakeholders. A great deal of care has been taken to formulate messaging in a manner that is consistent with the goals of the campaign and is mindful of some of the sensitivities that can sometimes arise around this topic. We suggest that you familiarize yourself with the top-level messaging below and use it as a guide. Then consider the specific audience you are communicating to and tailor your messages accordingly.

In tandem with this toolkit is a folder of images and social media graphics that can be used with the messaging below to complement your communications. The logos and text material on these images and graphics must remain visible in all communications channels in which they are used.

If you have questions or feedback on this toolkit, please direct your inquiries to [info@mybirthmatters.org](mailto:info@mybirthmatters.org) or visit [www.chcf.org/c-section-consumer-ed](http://www.chcf.org/c-section-consumer-ed) for more resources. The consumer-facing website for the My Birth Matters campaign can be found at [www.MyBirthMatters.org](http://www.mybirthmatters.org).

# Background and Top-Level Messaging

## What is this educational effort all about?

Cesarean sections (C-sections) can be important and even lifesaving in some circumstances. However, studies also have found that overuse of C-sections may result in harm to mothers and babies.

Overuse of C-sections matters because the surgery brings serious risks both for babies (such as higher rates of infection, respiratory complications, and neonatal intensive care unit stays, as well as lower breastfeeding rates) and mothers (such as higher rates of hemorrhage, transfusions, infection, and blood clots).

Additionally, once a mother has had a C-section, she has a greater than 90% chance of having the procedure for subsequent births — leading to higher risks of major complications, such as hysterectomy and uterine rupture. Unnecessary C-sections also drive up costs of care. The total average payment for C-sections is nearly 50% higher than for vaginal births, not including associated costs (for example, hospital readmissions, home care, and subsequent C-sections).

In the last few years across California, providers, payers, purchasers, policymakers, and others have been working together to reduce the rates of low-risk, first-birth C-sections. A key goal is to ensure that C-sections are only being performed when they are absolutely needed.

The “My Birth Matters” consumer education campaign has been designed to educate women about the overuse of C-sections and to encourage them to engage with their care team to support vaginal birth and reduce their chances of having a C-section that could have been avoided. The campaign offers free educational materials in English and Spanish, including brochures, posters, and other print materials designed to be displayed in hospitals and doctors’ offices. At the centerpiece of the campaign are four short animated videos (approximately two minutes each) that educate women about C-sections and encourage them to share their birth preferences.

## Why are you doing this?

In the last few years across California, health care providers, payers, purchasers, policymakers, and others have been working together to ensure that C-sections are only being performed when they are absolutely needed. C-section rates at California hospitals range from 10% at some hospitals to over 65% at others. The federal Healthy People 2020 initiative, which provides a set of objectives to improve the health of all Americans, set a goal to lower the rate of first-time, low-risk C-sections to 23.9% by the year 2020. That is also the statewide goal for California.

## Who is behind this campaign?

The campaign is a joint effort between the California Health Care Foundation (CHCF), the California Maternal Quality Care Collaborative (CMQCC), and Consumer Reports. Research was conducted and prototypes of the communications collateral were tested with consumers and providers and also vetted with a wide range of leading maternity care groups and health care organizations such as the California chapter (District IX) of the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), the California Association of Midwives (CNMA), and the Hospital Quality Institute.

## Who are you trying to reach?

The primary audience is California women with first-time, low-risk pregnancies across a wide range of incomes, races, ethnicities, and geographic areas. We also wanted to create something that providers and health educators could support, participate in, and feel comfortable sharing with their patients.

## What do you want women to learn from this effort and do?

We want women to take C-sections seriously and view them for what they are: major abdominal surgery. We want them to talk to their doctors and care team to work together in order to reduce their chances of having a C-section unless they absolutely need one.

## Top-Level Messages to Expectant Mothers:

* Cesarean sections (C-sections) can be important and even lifesaving in some circumstances. But many C-sections can be avoided.
* Did you know? Having a C-section is a major surgery. C-sections mean more chances for complications, like infections and heavy blood loss. They also take longer for mothers to heal.
* Sometimes C-sections are needed. But some hospitals are quicker to perform a C-section than others, even when they could have been avoided.
* Educate yourself. Visit MyBirthMatters.org and learn how you can reduce your chances of having a C-section unless it’s really needed.
* Your voice matters. Let your doctor know that you only want a C-section if it’s absolutely necessary. By taking steps early, you can make a difference for you and your baby.

# Newsletter Messaging

*[For communicating with providers and hospitals]*

Cesarean sections (C-sections) can be important and even lifesaving in some circumstances. However, studies also have found that overuse of C-sections may result in harm and poor outcomes for mothers and babies. In the last few years across California, many health care providers, payers, purchasers, and policymakers have been working to reduce the unwarranted variation in low-risk, first-birth C-sections. A key goal is to ensure that C-sections are only being performed when they are absolutely needed.

The California Health Care Foundation, California Maternal Quality Care Collaborative, and *Consumer Reports* have teamed up to develop a new consumer resource — My Birth Matters — designed to educate women about the overuse of C-sections and to encourage them to engage with their care team to support vaginal birth and reduce their chances of having an avoidable C-section.

Learn more about the campaign at [MyBirthMatters.org](https://goo.gl/7usoVR) and on social media at #MyBirthMatters. Resources for those who would like to join in raising awareness about the campaign can be found at <https://goo.gl/jQMr3W>.

*[For communicating directly with expectant mothers]*

Did you know? Cesarean sections (C-sections) can be important and even lifesaving in some circumstances. But many C-sections can be avoided. A C-section is a major surgery and that can mean more chances for complications, like infections and heavy blood loss. They also take longer for mothers to heal from.

The California Health Care Foundation, California Maternal Quality Care Collaborative, and *Consumer Reports* have teamed up to support you in learning about the overuse of C-sections and how you can work with your care team to have the healthiest birth for you and your baby. Visit [MyBirthMatters.org](https://goo.gl/QAFHMG) to learn more and follow the discussion on social media at #MyBirthMatters. Your voice matters!

# Sample Social Media Posts

## Facebook

Although Cesarean sections (C-sections) can be important and even lifesaving in some circumstances, they are also major surgery with risks and should be avoided unless absolutely necessary. Educate yourself. Visit [MyBirthMatters.org](https://goo.gl/QtbTkR) and learn how you can reduce your chances of having a C-section unless it’s really needed. #MyBirthMatters

Your voice matters. Let your doctor know that you only want a C-section if it’s absolutely necessary. By taking steps early, you can make a difference for you and your baby. Visit [MyBirthMatters.org](https://goo.gl/QtbTkR) and learn how you can reduce your chances of having a C-section unless it’s really needed. #MyBirthMatters

Did you know? Your chances of having a C-section can be much higher at some hospitals than others. C-sections mean more chances for complications, like infections and heavy blood loss. And C-sections are a major surgery, so it takes longer for mothers to heal. Talk to your care team and let them know you only want a C-section if it’s absolutely needed. Learn more at [MyBirthMatters.org](https://goo.gl/QtbTkR). #MyBirthMatters

If you want to have a healthy birth, it helps to have a strong birth team, which may include your doctor, your family, a labor and delivery nurse, nurse-midwife, doula, and/or childbirth educator. You may not have all of these people helping you, but you should know who they are. Your birth matters, and your birth team matters. Visit [MyBirthMatters.org](https://goo.gl/QtbTkR) and start building your team today. #MyBirthMatters

## Twitter

While C-sections can be important and lifesaving in some circumstances, they are also a major surgery and mean more chances for complications, like infections and heavy blood loss. Learn more: https://goo.gl/pSV25t #MyBirthMatters @CMQCC @CHCFNews @ConsumerReports

Did you know? Sometimes C-sections are needed. But some hospitals are quicker to perform a C-section than others, even when they could have been avoided. Educate yourself: https://goo.gl/pSV25t #MyBirthMatters @CMQCC @CHCFNews @ConsumerReports

Are you expecting a baby? Let your doctor know that you only want a C-section if it’s absolutely necessary. Your voice matters! By taking steps early, you can make a difference for you and your baby. https://goo.gl/pSV25t #MyBirthMatters @CMQCC @CHCFNews @ConsumerReports

Do you provide or manage care for pregnant mothers? Learn about efforts to educate about C-sections and encourage conversations to minimize chances of getting a C-section unless absolutely necessary. https://goo.gl/pSV25t #MyBirthMatters @CMQCC @CHCFNews @ConsumerReports

If you want a healthy birth for your baby, it helps to have a strong birth team. Start building your birth team today. Learn more: https://goo.gl/pSV25t #MyBirthMatters @CMQCC @CHCFNews @ConsumerReports

Did you know? Your chances of having a C-section can be much higher at some hospitals than others. Educate yourself. See your California hospital's C-section rate at https://goo.gl/pSV25t #MyBirthMatters @CMQCC @CHCFNews @ConsumerReports

